

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION REQUEST

The following constitutes an application for preliminary consideration for the nomination potential of a property to the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This does not mean that a property is being nominated to the registers at this time. Rather it is being evaluated to determine if it qualifies for such listings. Applicants will be notified of the board's actions in writing shortly after the meeting.

Please **type** and use 8-1/2" X 11" paper if additional space is needed.

All submitted materials become the property of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and cannot be returned.

1. HISTORIC NAME OF PROPERTY (if historic name is not known, use current name of area)

NORTH GHENT

2. LOCATION

A. Street or Route Olney Road; Boissevain Avenue; Redgate Avenue; Raleigh Avenue; Westover Avenue; Graydon Avenue; Princess Anne Boulevard; Colley Avenue; Hampton Boulevard; Blow Street; Manteo Street.

B. County or City Norfolk, Virginia

3. LEGAL OWNER/S OF PROPERTIES. Include names and addresses of all property owners in district. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

Name:

Address:

City/State: _____ ZIP

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4. GENERAL DATA

A. Date or dates of selected buildings: First quarter 20th century

B. Approximate acreage: 80 acres

C. Architects or carpenter/masons (if known): John Graham, Engineer; Walter Herron Taylor, architect, engineer; John Kevan Peebles, architect; Finley Forbes Ferguson, architect; Charles J. Calrow, Arnold Eberhard, and James W. Lee, architects.

D. Primary Use of Buildings: Residential: single-family; multiple-family; religious.

5. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The area today known as North Ghent is a small, but densely developed residential neighborhood located at the northern boundary of the Ghent Historic District. The neighborhood is located within walking distance of Norfolk's central commercial core and was historically part of the planned residential community known as Ghent. The area under consideration for potential historic district status is bound to the south by Olney Road, on the north by Princess Anne Road, on the east by the eastern side of Colonial Avenue and on the west by Colley Avenue and Hampton Boulevard. The eastern boundary on the east side of Colonial Avenue is drawn along the alleyways east of the main north-south axis until Westover Street at which point the boundary is pulled back to the middle of the street to eliminate the 1980s condominium infill construction on the avenue's east side.

Each of the boundaries has been selected for either visual, architectural or historical reasons. The southern boundary at Olney Road is the northern boundary of the National Register Ghent Historic District, and reflects the historical development of the residential community. Although the entire area was included in the original plat, the area developed in phases; the Ghent Historic District represents the initial phase of development, while the area north of Olney Road represents the area's second period of growth. In addition, the relatively heavily travelled Olney Road creates a visual barrier and well-defined boundary between Ghent and North Ghent. On the east, the original plat of Ghent extended east of Colonial Avenue to Moran Avenue, however, this area has been reconfigured, and Moran is no

longer an extant street. The proposed eastern edge which jogs to either side of Colonial Avenue is based upon existing architectural integrity. The boundary is clearly defined as historic versus modern building fabric.

Colley Avenue and Hampton Boulevard, the area's western boundaries, are both primary transportation corridors which were widened in the 20th century and swiped through the existing residential community, clearly forming an edge. The northern edge at Princess Anne Road, another important traffic artery, similarly creates a visual barrier. Here, the architecture is a combination of single-family dwellings and low-scale apartment buildings.

As part of the original plat of the planned residential community developed by The Norfolk Company, the streets of North Ghent are regularly laid out following a simple grid plan. Colonial Avenue runs slightly askew the full length of the residential area. Stockley Gardens, three large squares of planted park space with buildings on either side of the open area, serves as the core of the proposed North Ghent historic district.

The area is characterized by its residential nature, but also includes a significant collection of religious structures scattered throughout the district and lining Stockley Gardens. Some commercial buildings clustered primarily along the Colley Avenue commercial corridor can also be found in North Ghent. The residential architecture is a combination of single-family detached residences and three-and four-story apartment houses. In general, the southern extreme of the proposed historic district exclusively includes single-family residences similar in size, scale and style to those found in the already designated historic district. A predominance of single-family dwellings with an occasional apartment house characterizes the center of the proposed district, such as the stretch of Westover Avenue between Blow and Manteo Streets, which includes a three-story apartment complex at its southwest corner. Further north, on Graydon Street, for instance or along certain stretches of the more important transportation corridors such as Colonial Avenue and Princess Anne Road, significant groupings of apartment houses can be found. This architectural trend from single-family residences to apartment houses clearly follows the physical and chronological development of the area which moved from Mowbray Arch northward in time.

North Ghent provides a combination of richly landscaped residential enclaves bounded and traversed by the commercial and

transportation corridors. Colonial Avenue on the east and Hampton Boulevard on the west are primary north-south traffic routes for in-coming and out-going downtown Norfolk traffic. Colley Avenue, particularly around Princess Anne Road, is a commercial strip offering services, such as restaurants and small stores to the local resident. The residential streets at the interior of the grid are tree-lined and, though the yards are small, they are generally planted with small trees and shrubs. Long, rectangular grassy plots with mature shade trees lining the center culminate at circular gardens with benches in Stockley Gardens and offer a visually tranquil setting for the houses on the east and west sides of the open space. Graydon Avenue between Blow and Manteo is divided into east and westbound traffic lanes by a wide grassy median that similarly offers a park-like setting for the residences flanking either side of the street.

Contributing to the urban-suburban feel of Norfolk's first planned residential development, most of the residences are slightly set back from the street with a small yard and side walk in front and are separated from one another by narrow driveways or alleys. In general, the houses are detached; however, several pairs of townhouses are grouped along the west side of Stockley Gardens, adding to the in-town or urban setting of this early suburb. The buildings range from individual, architect or master-builder-designed houses from the turn of the century to rows of early 20th century speculative houses having similar massing and detail. The houses are all of substantial size and are well-built, exhibiting quality craftsmanship. Some modern infill, including low-lying and incompatible 1960s and 1970s garden apartments on the east side of Stockley Gardens, as well as some more stylistically appropriate 1980s infill on the west side of Stockley Gardens, stand as non-contributing buildings in the historic community.

Stylistically, late Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles dominate the residential architecture of the area. The earliest residences, built between 1893 and the turn of the century, are located on the 700 block of Colonial Avenue, between Olney Road and Raleigh Avenue, and are designed in a Queen Anne or other high Victorian style. These Queen Anne houses each feature projecting window bays, towers, wide porches, irregular rooflines, dormer windows and projecting chimney stacks. The house at the corner of Colonial Avenue and Raleigh Street (721 Colonial Avenue) which features a corner tower and projecting bay with oriel window along the Raleigh Street elevation, provides an elegant edge and smooth transition from this important north-

south corridor to the residential streets within the subdivision.

The houses on Stockley Gardens are more transitional, having been built after the gardens were laid out in 1900. The Tatterson House (122-251) located at the corner of Stockley Gardens and Redgate Avenue and built ca. 1903 for local builder Ebert Tatterson, is a good example of an imposing, transitional-style house as found in North Ghent. The 2-1/2-story brick house has polygonal bays, corbelled chimneys, and polychromatic brickwork typical of the Queen Anne style, but the regularity and overall massing generally associated with the Georgian Revival style. Less representative of the area architecture is the Henke Residence, at Stockley Gardens and Raleigh Avenue. This impressive ca. 1917 house is stylistically eclectic and features two crenellated towers to either side of a central bay, a wrap-around porch with stone columns and piers, and a hipped roof with hipped-roof dormers and tall chimney stacks.

The 1900-1910 townhouses on the west side of Stockley Gardens are also clearly transitional, but have architectural features, such as front porches, dormers, projecting gables and window bays, that typically characterize earlier Victorian architecture. Deviating from the transitional norm around the Gardens are two townhouses organized in pairs and located on the west side of the Gardens. These houses, with their flat front facades, have shed all Victorian pretenses.

The ca. 1920s architecture found along most of the east-west streets making up the neighborhood is mostly substantial, American-four-square type dwelling forms reflecting a vernacular Colonial Revival style. These two or 2-1/2-story houses are square in plan, have two or three-bay-wide facades, side-passage entries and hipped roofs with dormer windows. They invariably have porches which extend across their front elevations, and often two-story rear, sleeping porches.

The apartment buildings found throughout the area are generally three and four-stories in height, and often take advantage of the larger corner lots. In general, these relatively low-lying buildings do not overwhelm the residential quality of the neighborhood. In addition, they are often articulated with architectural elements, such as front porches, that are character-defining features of the neighborhood.

The religious architecture is stylistically eclectic, ranging from the Classical Revival style of the Ohel Shalom Temple on

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Stockley Gardens to the Romanesque Revival Sacred Heart Church at Princess Anne Road and Blow Street.

Whether of brick or frame construction, the architecture is substantial and well-built. The quality of design and craftsmanship is clearly evident in the older, architect-designed residences, but is also apparent in the early to mid-20th-century speculative development. This residential architecture, though repetitive in form and detail, has a level of craftsmanship and attention to detail not necessarily found in other residential neighborhoods from this period.

6. HISTORY

The residential neighborhood currently called North Ghent was historically part of the original 220-acre tract of land which was subdivided by the Norfolk Company and developed as Norfolk's first planned suburb. The area, called Ghent after an historic property, included eight parcels of land, encompassed by the present Botetourt Street on the east, Orapax Street on the West, Princess Anne Boulevard on the north, and Mowbray Arch on the south. An 80-acre portion of this original subdivision is currently recognized as the Ghent National Register Historic District and reflects the first phase of development in the planned suburb. The boundaries of the proposed North Ghent Historic District reflect the area's second phase of growth, which began in 1899 and continued well into the 1920s. Subsequent development occurred in the western section of the suburb, now known as West Ghent, primarily after 1920.

Before its development as a residential suburb in the late 19th century, Ghent was a large farm located on a rugged site known as Pleasant Point. Named "Ghent" to commemorate the signing of the treaty ending the War of 1812, the area remained farmland until 1890 at which time the Norfolk Company, a newly formed land company purchased Ghent as a speculative venture.

The site of Ghent for Norfolk's first planned suburb was determined by three principal factors: 1) its proximity to the projected expansion of Norfolk's horse-drawn streetcar system; 2) its proximity to the toll bridge across Smith's Creek north from Duke Street (completed 1887); and 3) Norfolk's 1890 annexation of Atlantic City which increased the population and population potential for the City of Norfolk.

John Graham, a civil engineer from Philadelphia was contracted by the Norfolk Company to lay out the new suburb. His plan combined a standard grid system with a romantic semi-circular section, called Mowbray Arch and located at the southern end of the suburb. This semi-circle, which filled in existing marshland with mud dredged from the Hague, exploited the area's strategic waterfront location and quickly appealed to the city's upperclass residents. The entire subdivision was traversed from north to south by Colonial Avenue and each of the streets were landscaped with silver maples and magnolias which have since been replaced by other varieties.

By December 1890, work had begun on the laying the streets, the filling of the shoreline and the shaping of Mowbray arch. In May

of 1891, the Norfolk Company began construction of the first houses, designed by the Baltimore architect J. Appleton Wilson and built by the Company to encourage independent development in Ghent. By the end of the summer of 1892, the Company began to sell lots and by 1900, the same year streetcar service was extended to Ghent, over 100 houses had been completed within the Mowbray Arch section alone.¹ By 1905 the development of this southern section of Ghent and the area forming the Ghent Historic District was virtually complete and development of other sections of Ghent were well underway.

While the first phase of development, from 1892 until 1900, took place primarily in the desirable Mowbray Arch and southern section of Ghent, plans for encouraging the development of those areas outside of Mowbray Arch were formally underway. In 1899, following the economic panic of 1893, The Norfolk Company officially announced that it would begin construction of another large section of the Ghent subdivision. In April of that year, the Company wrote:

"The area now being improved is an extension of the Ghent Streets north of Olney Road to and including Redgate Avenue and west of Colonial Avenue to Colley Avenue, including Stockley Gardens."²

These boundaries directly follow the lines of the proposed North Ghent Historic District on three of its four sides. The northern boundary of the proposed historic district extends to the original boundaries of the subdivision at Princess Anne Road.

The primary physical improvements to take place during this second phase of development in Ghent was the laying out of Stockley Gardens and the construction of houses on the lots of land fronting the north-south and east-west streets making up this northern section of Ghent. The three rectangular blocks of land located just north of the Hague and called Stockley Gardens were laid out in 1900 by Walter Herron Taylor, prominent Norfolk citizen, engineer, and architect.³ Today, a wide walk runs down the center of the long, open, grassy squares and culminates at a

¹ National Register of Historic Places Inventory--Nomination Form for Ghent, 1980.

² As quoted by John Parker in "The Suburb Ghent," Virginian Magazine, November 7, 1982, p.25.

³ "New Life for an Old Neighborhood," unpublished paper by Frances Gretes, May, 1970. From the Sargeant Arms Room at the Kirn Memorial Room, Vertical Files.

circular planting bed with benches. Maturing shade trees and low plants have replaced the original rose bush planting scheme.

Once laid out, Stockley Gardens was built upon with residences and religious architecture. Several of the townhouses on the west side of Stockley Gardens were designed and built by Stockley Gardens architect, Mr. Walter Herron Taylor, for his family.⁴ The east side of Stockley Gardens includes some residential buildings, but more notably, is lined with impressive religious structures. The Ghent Methodist Church, located on Stockley Gardens at Raleigh Avenue, was built in 1902. The church is patterned after Sir Christopher Wren's Saint Martin's-in-the-Fields and was designed by Norfolk architect John Kevan Peebles. The large, Gothic Revival church at Olney Road and Stockley Gardens was built in 1909 to the designs of the Philadelphia architecture firm of Watson and Hickol and assisted by the Norfolk firm of Ferguson and Calrow. The Temple Ohef Shalom, also on Stockley Gardens and designed by John Kevan Peebles, was built somewhat later, in 1917.

By 1910, almost the entire area between Colonial Avenue and Colley Avenue, north of Olney Road and including Stockley Gardens, was built upon. Based upon map research and confirmed by the on-site findings, it appears that the physical development of the area moved from south to north. Like the development of the Ghent Historic District which began at its southern terminus, Mowbray Arch and continued north, the development of North Ghent began around Stockley Gardens and moved north to Princess Anne Boulevard. According to the 1910 Sanborn Map, few lots remained undeveloped on the streets south of Redgate Avenue, while north of it, development was increasingly sparse. Redgate Avenue, for instance is itself almost entirely built upon, while Westover Avenue, one street north consisted of half-built and half-vacant lots, and Graydon Avenue, one more street north included scattered residential development. No development was located on Princess Anne Boulevard (then Armistead Avenue) which was the northern edge of the subdivision. Most of the development of this period included single-family residences; however, the Jamestown Exposition of 1907 which was held in Norfolk stimulated the growth of the apartment building in Ghent and the city. Several apartment buildings, including Pelham Place Apartments, the Holland Apartments, and Raleigh Square were built in North Ghent specifically to house persons coming to the Exposition.

Between 1910 and 1928, the entire North Ghent area was fully

⁴ *ibid*, p. 19.

developed. Much of the development in this period consisted of the construction of three and four-story apartment houses on the few remaining lots along Redgate, and in the undeveloped lots north of this street. Graydon Avenue or Graydon Park which fronts a grassy median, was built upon with a combination of single-family residences and apartment houses. West Princess Anne Boulevard, which had been void of buildings in 1910, was almost filled in by 1928 with only a few remaining vacant lots scattered between built ones. This northern edge was similarly built upon with a combination of single-family and multiple-family dwelling units.

Ghent continued to attract middle and upper middle-class residents to the community well into the 20th century. With the wide acceptance of the automobile into society and the development of suburbs outside of downtown Norfolk, the stability of Ghent as a single-family residential neighborhood began to falter. After World War II, many of the large townhouses were converted into rooming houses. Commercial development along the major roads in Ghent began to creep into the formerly residential enclave.

In 1964 Ghent was declared a Conservation Area. Despite this designation, approximately two hundred buildings in the conservation area were demolished in the period between 1964 and 1970.⁵ In 1970, a 65-acre parcel of land in East Ghent was razed for redevelopment. The Norfolk Redevelopment Housing Authority controlled private development of the land which was zoned for single-family, detached and townhouse residences made to appeal to the middle and upper-income families. Called Ghent Square, this area is east of Colonial Avenue, and is just outside the boundaries proposed for the North Ghent Historic District.

In 1975 the City of Norfolk Department of City Planning proposed a zoning plan for the Ghent Conservation Area. The plan established four major points: 1) preserve and enhance the collective character of Ghent, 2) preserve and enhance the individual integrity of structures of architectural merit, 3) accommodate functional needs of the present without disrupting the environment of the past, and 4) establish compatible visual and functional relationships between Ghent and surrounding areas. Since the designation of Ghent as a Conservation Area, development in Ghent has continued in a positive manner. The residential area, which had declined in the 1950s and 1960s, is

⁵ "Ghent: Proposed Zoning for Historic and Cultural Conservation Zoning," Norfolk Department of City Planning, 1975, p.40.

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once again a much-desired and sought-after place to live. Small commercial concerns including corner restaurants encourage the in-town living and the well-landscaped streets make Ghent exactly what it was intended to be--an attractive suburb within walking distance of downtown Norfolk.

7. PHOTOGRAPHS

Black and white photographs and color slides of general views and streetscapes must be provided. Photographs of important buildings in district would also be helpful. The inclusion of photographs is essential to the completion of this application. Without photographs, this application can not be considered.

Photocopies of select photographs are attached; actual photographs have been submitted in VDHR photo envelopes.

8. MAP

Please include a map showing the location of the proposed district. A sketch map is acceptable but please not street route numbers, addresses, buildings, prominent geographic features, etc. Please include a "north" arrow. This form can not be processed without a map showing the property's exact location.

9. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

10: APPLICANT INFORMATION

NAME: TRACERIES TELEPHONE: (301) 656-5283

ADDRESS: 5420 Western Avenue

CITY/STATE: Chevy Chase, Maryland 20015

SIGNATURE

DATE: October 18, 1994

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PROPERTY NAME: North Ghent

**PLEASE SUPPLY THE FOLLOWING NAMES AND ADDRESSES AS APPLICABLE.
THIS INFORMATION MUST BE PROVIDED BEFORE YOUR PIF CAN BE
CONSIDERED BY THE STATE REVIEW BOARD:**

Mayor: Paul D. Fraim
1109 City Hall Building
Norfolk, VA 23501

City Manager:
James B. Oliver, Jr.
1101 City Hall Building
Norfolk, VA 23501

Director, Planning Division

John M. Dugan, Director
Dept. of City Planning and Codes Administration
508 City Hall Building

Chairman, Planning Commission

Dr. William L. Craig, Jr.
451 Lee Point Road
Norfolk, VA

Executive Director

Hampton Roads Planning District Commission
Arthur L. Collins
723 Woodlake Drive
Chesapeake, Virginia 23320

City Council member or Supervisor in whose district the property
is located:

Paul D. Fraim
Dr. Mason C. Andrews

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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"The Development of Ghent: A Chronology," Unpublished document, no date, from the vertical files at the Sargeant Memorial Room, Kirn Memorial Library, Norfolk.

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"Ghent: Proposed Zoning for Historic and Cultural Conservation Zoning," Norfolk Department of City Planning, 1975.

"Ghent Renewal Supported," Virginian-Pilot, April 26, 1961.

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Greates, Frances. "New Life for an Old Neighborhood: An Historical and Architectural Analysis of Ghent, 1890-1970" Unpublished paper dated May 15, 1970 from the vertical files at the Sargeant Memorial Room, Kirn Memorial Library, Norfolk.

Smith, Robert C., "Brambleton Went, Ghent to Follow Northward Surging Commerce," Virginian-Pilot, June 28, 1955.

"The Suburb Ghent," Virginia Magazine, November 7, 1982.